The Russian Military Intervention in Ukraine: A Theoretical Discussion on the Ukrainian Crisis

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Abstract

The Ukrainian crisis of 2014 had severe consequences for the relationship between Russia and the West. What began as an internal Ukrainian dispute over the future of the country, soon transformed into an international crisis as a low intense civil war between mainly pro-Russian separatist and regular Ukrainian forces erupted in the Donbass. The purpose of this research is to explain why Russia made a military intervention in Ukraine. The paper offers a realist and a liberal perspective on the crisis and analysis whether these perspectives can explain why the conflict occurred. The realist perspective is mainly based on John Mearsheimer's essay, *Why the Ukrainian Crisis is the West's Fault.* While the liberal perspective utilizes Michael McFaul's essay, *Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukrainian Crisis?* To analyses these perspectives the research offers two hypotheses based on Mearsheimer's and McFaul's work. These are tested using historical events, speeches and general developments in the relationship between Russia and the West. The realist perspective argues that the West holds most of the blame for the Ukrainian crisis while the liberal perspective mainly argues that the West was at fault. The research has showed that there are several developments from the end of the Cold War to the actual conflict which have played a role in creating an environment for conflict. The paper argues that it has especially been the West use of international institutions to promote security and democracy, which put the sides on a confrontational course. Although Russia and the West has been able to engage in a mutual beneficial relationship at times, it has mainly been based on the sides willingness to make concession. At the same time, this has not been possible on situations where Russia has believed its strategic objectives or security has been threatened. In these instances, Russia has turned to a zero-sum policy towards the West and acted as realist theory dictates. Meanwhile, the West had antagonized Russia by continuing to expand its influence through EU and NATO although Russia has made strong objections to the development. The project concludes that Russia made a military intervention in Ukraine, because it was unacceptable for Russia to have a neighbor state, as strategic important as Ukraine, falling into the hands of the West. Therefore, Russia chose to make a military intervention to regain control over Ukraine.

Introduction

The unset of the Ukrainian conflict was a series of violent demonstrations in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, beginning in November 2013. The civil uprising began on the night the Ukrainian President, Victor Yanukovych, announced that he was suspending preparations for signing an Association Agreement (AA) with the European Union (EU). In short terms, the AA promised trade liberalization between EU and Ukraine, and eased restrictions on travel. In long terms, the deal would move Ukraine closer to the Wes and away from Russian influence. The Ukrainian decisionmakers had, however, been under pressure from Russia who threatened to implement economic sanctions to deter the Ukrainian government from following through on the deal (Traynor and Grytsenko 2013). The deal was severely opposed by the Kremlin, because the Russian regime perceived the association agreement as EU encroachment on the Russian sphere of influence (ibid). Consequently, the Ukrainian government opted to suspend negotiations with the EU fearing Russian retaliation, officially stating that the decision was a matter of national security (Stern 2013). Instead, the Ukrainian regime declared that it was renewing dialogue with Russia and the Eurasian Customs Union (Traynor and Grytsenko 2013).

The situation further escalated when Yanukovych left Kiev in February 2014, and the Ukrainian parliament voted to oust the president in favor of an interim leadership devoted to put the country back on course for European integration. In the end of February 2014, Russia launched a covert military intervention in Ukraine dispatching “little green men” into the sovereign state of Ukraine, occupying Crimea and formally annexing the peninsula in March after a controversial referendum (Walker 2015). What began as an internal Ukrainian dispute over the future of the country, soon transformed into an international crisis as a low intense civil war between mainly pro-Russian separatist and regular Ukrainian forces erupted in the Donbass. In response to the occupation of Eastern parts of Ukraine, the United States (U.S.) and EU implemented sanctions against Russia. The Russian intervention was, however, justified by the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, who called the ousting of President Yanukovych "an anti-constitutional takeover, an armed seizure of power," (Putin 2014a) and later argued that "[Crimea] should be part of a strong and stable sovereignty, which today can only be Russian" (Putin, 2014b). The West strongly condemned the Russian actions against Ukraine, calling for an immediate end to the Russian occupation of the Crimean Peninsula (NATO 2004). The Russian intervention renewed tension between the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) and Russia, because the Western military alliance believed that the Kremlin’s actions were in violation of international law. In addition, NATO claimed that the Russian actions challenged the Atlantic Alliances visions for “a Europe whole, free, and at peace” (ibid). The Kremlin’s decision to make an intervention in Ukraine strained the relationship between the West and Russia. In addition, it severely isolated Russia. In this paper, I have chosen to

investigate why Russia made the decision to use military force against Ukraine. Therefore, I have chosen the ask the following question:

"Why did Russia make a military intervention in Ukraine?"

This project seeks to understand why Russia chose to use military force against Ukraine in 2004. I do not, however, seek to make a foreign policy analysis of the Russian decision making leading up to the conflict. Instead, I will establish a realist and a liberal perspective on the Ukrainian crisis and estimate whether it is possible to answer the problem formulation using these.

Methodology

Research Approach

To establish the two perspectives, I have looked for existing theories on the Ukrainian crisis. For the realist perspective, I have chosen John Mearsheimer's essay, *Why the Ukrainian Crisis is the West's Fault*, from 2014. In addition, I have used contribution from Alexander Lukins essay, *What the Kremlin is thinking*, also from 2014. For the liberal perspective I have chosen Michael McFaul's essay, *Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukrainian Crisis?* From 2014. In addition, I have used contribution from Stephen Sestanovich from the same essay. Afterwards, I have established a realist and a liberal explanation based on these perspectives. To analyses these perspective, I have narrowed them down to a separate hypothesis for both liberalism and a separate hypothesis for realism. After that I have tested whether the explanations are consistent with the available data. Finally, I have discussed my findings to answer the problem formulation. The two parts of the analysis will be treated separately until the discussion.

Theoretical framework for realism

In his essay, Mearsheimer challenges what he calls "the prevailing wisdom in the West" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 1), arguing that it is incorrect to blame the Russian military intervention in Ukraine on Russian aggression. Instead, he offers a different interpretation of the conflict, arguing that "the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 2). Mearsheimer points to the spread of NATO as the "taproot of the trouble" (Ibid). He also emphasizes EU's expansion eastwards and the West's active support of pro-democratic movement and organizations within Ukraine as main reasons for the conflict. In addition, he argues that the governments in the U.S. and Europa; the West: "subscribes to a flawed view of international politics" and, therefore, "have been blindsided" by the Russian military intervention in Ukraine (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 3). Mearsheimer thereby subscribes to two parallel causal connections as the main reason for the conflict. Firstly, the Western leaders lack of understanding of international politics. More precisely, their dissociation from realpolitik. Secondly, the

spread of Western influence through organizations and ideology towards the Soviet empires former sphere of influence.

The prevailing wisdom of the West

What Mearsheimer describes as the "prevailing wisdom of the West" can be interpreted as a strict liberal worldview that dictates both the mindset of Western leaders as well as the discourse within the West (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 1). Mearsheimer argues that Russia and the West have been "operating with different playbook" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 26). While Russia has been "acting according to realist dictates," the Western counterparts "have been adhering to liberal ideas about international politics" (Ibid). Mearsheimer believes that the fundamental understanding of geopolitics has been abandoned by the West. Consequently, because the West subscribes to a wrong understanding of international politics, according to Mearsheimer, it is bound to misinterpret the actions of Russia specifically, and international relations in general. He points to the fact that although the West is against Russia's actions, "it should understand the logic behind it" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 18). This is, however, not the case, according to Mearsheimer. Instead, the West is baffled by Russia's actions and Putin is often perceived as an "irrational" or "mentally unbalanced" leader (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 27). Mearsheimer debunks these claims arguing that Putin is in fact "a first-class strategist who should be respected by anyone challenging him on foreign policy" (Ibid).

The Western understanding of international relations does not only reflect on its perception of other states or their leaders' behavior, but also in the way it understands its own actions. Mearsheimer believes that the West is blind to its own conducts that might be considered threatening or aggressive according to other states. Consequently, "most Western leaders continue to deny that Putin's behavior might be motivated by legitimate security concerns" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 32). Instead, the "prevailing wisdom of the West" leads them to interprets the actions of Russia as aggressive; not defensive (Mearsheimer 2014: p1). The annexation of Crimea has therefore been interpreted as a result of a Russian desire to "resuscitate the Soviet Empire" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 1). Russia has, so to speak, just been waiting for a "pretext for Putin's decision to order Russian forces to seize parts of Ukraine" (Ibid). According to Mearsheimer, this is not the case, and it is a wrong interpretation of the reasoning that lead to the Russian military intervention in Ukraine. Instead, he believes that Russia's actions during the crisis were motivated by legitimate security concerns, because "great powers are always sensitive to potential threat near their home territory" (Mearsheimer 2014: p18). Therefore, Russia would rather "wreck Ukraine as a functioning state" than allow it to become "a Western stronghold on Russia's doorstep," according to Mearsheimer (Mearsheimer 2014: p16).

Lukin's essay follows the same logic as described in Mearsheimer's. The emphasis is also on the failed logic of the West, which, according to Lukin, created the current conflictual environment between the West and Russia. Lukin takes a more historical outlook pointing to mistakes made by the West in its association with Russia after the Cold War. According to Lukin "the seed of the Ukrainian crisis were planted in the Cold War's immediate aftermath" (Lukin 2014: para. 3). He argues that the West was faced with two options at the time: "either make a serious attempt to assimilate Russia into the Western system or wrest away piece after piece of its former sphere of influence" (Ibid). According to Lukin, the West chose the latter; opting for an "anti-Russian course" (Ibid).

Although the relationship between Russia and the West was improved after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, Lukin believes that "Washington and […] Europe never considered Moscow a true ally" (Lukin 2014: p1). Instead of trying to incorporate Russia into Western institutions and organizations, Russia was marginalized in international politics and left isolated. Lukin describes a window of opportunity in the aftermath of the Cold War, where the West could lay a foundation for a new relationship with Russia. The West never took advantage of the opportunity, however, and instead "maintained the zero-sum mindset left over from the Cold War" (Lukin 2014: para. 5). Consequently, Russia was still perceived as an adversary and not as a partner. Lukin believes that Russian leaders were surprised by this approach, because "they had expected that both sides would increase cooperation, remains responsive to each other's interests, and make mutually acceptable compromises" (Lukin 2014: para. 5). Lukin argues that this was not the case, mentioning disagreements over decisions made concerning the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Iran. In these incidence, the West acted without the consensus of Russia and a compromise was never reached. In addition, the spread of NATO was a key point of disagreement and later conflict, according to Lukin. He argues that Western leaders after the unification of Germany promised Mikhail Gorbachev, the last President of the Soviet Union, "that they would not expand NATO eastwards" (Lukin 2014: para. 4). The promise was not upheld, however, and "12 new members, including former part of the Soviet Union" (ibid) were introduced into the security community. Russia's concerns and interests were, according to Lukin, overlooked by the West and the disagreements between the sides was blamed on "the short time Russia had spent under Western influence" (Lukin 2014: para. 1).

Lukin makes an important point about the assumptions, or expectations, the West had towards Russia in the post-Cold War period. According to him, the West "assumed that Russia shared their basic domestic and foreign policy goals and would gradually come to embrace Western-style democracies at home and liberal norms abroad" (Ibid). According to Lukin, the West believed that because Soviet communism failed, the only option for Russia was to turn to liberal capitalism. This was, however, not the case. The West failed to

"assimilate Russia into the Western system" (Lukin 2014: para. 3) and instead antagonized Russia and pushed it further away by not understanding, or accepting, its concerns and interest. Lukin concludes that the exclusive course towards Russia empowered Russian leaders "who wanted Moscow to reject the Western system and instead become an independent, competing center of power in the new multipolar world" (Lukin 2014: para. 6). Thus, the window of opportunity was not seized, and the West unintentionally created a new foundation for a Russian antipole to the Western consensus and understanding of international relations.

The spread of Western influence through organizations and ideology

In addition to a flawed understanding of international politics, Mearsheimer addresses the expansionism of the West as the second key factor leading to the Ukrainian crisis. According to him, the West is using a "triple package of policies" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 13) in its endeavor to spread its influence. The policies include: "NATO enlargement, EU expansion, and democracy promotion" (Ibid). Although the three are interlinked, Mearsheimer concludes that NATO enlargement is "the taproot of the trouble," (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 2) and points out that Russia objections to NATO enlargement had been evident since the mid-1990s. The Kremlin's concerns were ignored and at the time, Russia was too weak to "derail NATO's eastwards movement" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 6). Consequently, Russia had to accept the development. The enlargements in 1999 and 2004, "did not look so threatening, since none of the new members shared a border with Russia, save for the tiny Baltic countries" (Ibid). However, Mearsheimer believes a turning point was reached in 2008, when the alliance considered admitting Georgia and Ukraine at the NATO summit in Bucharest. Russia countered by launching an "invasion" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 9) of Georgia in 2008. Mearsheimer believes that the invasion should have "dispelled any remaining doubts about Putin's determination to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO" (Ibid). With the invasion of Georgia, Russia had marked a red line and showed its determination to subdue its neighboring states if they acted against Russian interests. Although Russia had made its point clear, not only in words but now also in military action, the objections went unheard, according to Mearsheimer. The desire to incorporate Georgia and Ukraine into the security alliance was never publicly abandoned by NATO and the following year, the alliance admitted two new countries into its framework (Mearsheimer 2014). The expansion of the EU was also considered a threat by Russia, especially concerning Ukraine. Mearsheimer points out that "[i]n the eyes of Russian leaders, EU expansion is a stalking horse for NATO expansion" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 10). Following this logic, with the invasion of Georgia in mind, it is evident that Russia would go to great lengths to keep Ukraine away from any type of integration into Western institutions and organizations.

According to Mearsheimer, "the final straw" for Putin came with the "illegal overthrow" of Viktor Yanukovych in 2014, Ukraine's democratically elected and pro-Russian president (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 2). In the

aftermath of the ouster, a new government was installed that was "pro-Western and anti-Russian to the core" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 13). Mearsheimer argues that "[n]o Russian leader would […] stand idly by while the West helped install a government there that was determined to integrate Ukraine into the West" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 17). The ouster of Yanukovych was, according to Mearsheimer, directly backed by Washington and indirectly through Western social engineering in Ukraine. He argues that Russia took Crimea in response to the ouster of Yanukovych to: "destabilize Ukraine until it abandoned its efforts to join the West" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 2). The Russian military intervention in Ukraine was, according to Mearsheimer, a pushback against Western expansionism and, therefore, not an aggressive enterprise. The Russian retaliation should not have come as a surprise, because "the West had been moving into Russia's backyard and threatening its core strategic interests, a point Putin made emphatically and repeatedly" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 3). In addition, Mearsheimer points out that it is unwise to underestimate, or downplay, the security concerns of Russia, because "it is the Russians, not the West, who ultimately get to decide what counts as a threat to them" (Mearsheimer 2014: para. 19).

Hypothesis for realism

For realism, there are a number of interlinked themes used to argue why the Ukrainian crisis was the West fault, and not a Russian made crisis. The overall theme of these arguments is that the West and Russia has different worldviews. The different perception of events and actions finds expression in mistrust, misconceptions, and a general distorted view of the other parts intentions. Mearsheimer believes that the West has abandoned fundamental understandings of geopolitics, instead, adopting a westernized worldview that makes Western leaders unable to grasp Russian actions or concerns. Lukin also voices this perception, arguing that the West's deterministic approach to Russia after the Cold War has pushed the country further away from international cooperation based on Western values. Instead, the West has managed to empower Russian leaders with anti-Western sentiments by applying a zero-sum approach to Russia, compara.ble to that of the Cold War. The other important point is the spread of Western influence, especially concerning NATO. For the chosen realists, this is the taproot of the problem. The West has, according to this perception, neglected Russian interests and chosen to expand its influence eastwards, downplaying or ignoring Russian security concerns and objections. This has, according to Mearsheimer, resulted in a constant state of disagreement and conflict between the sides, since the first Russian objections in the 1990's. A turning point came in 2008, when Russia drew a red line by making a military intervention in Georgia. However, the West did not understand the significance of the event and instead pushed on to expand its influence through both NATO enlargement, EU expansion, and democracy promotion; the triple package of policies. The Western expansionism finally lead to the conflict over Ukraine, where the ouster of Yanukovych forced Russia into making a military intervention against Ukraine in order to secure its interests and push back against the

Western encroachment to its near abroad. The West did not see the conflict coming, because it subscribes to a flawed view of international politics, and because the Western leaders are blind to their own actions that might be considered a threat by other states; such as Russia.

In the light of these realist insights an answer to the problem formulations is that Russia made a military intervention in Ukraine, because the West forced Russia to act in Ukraine by subscribing to a flawed understanding of geopolitics, leading Western leaders to expand its influence without regards for Russian interests and, thereby, misunderstanding how great powers, in this case Russia, acts in such circumstances.

Analysis approach for realism

In order to examine the realist position on the Ukrainian crisis, put forward in this project, I will look into the most important claims connected to the final hypothesis. The question whether the West has a flawed view of international politics, raised by Mearsheimer, is not easily answered, because it mainly depends on the eyes of the beholder. It is possible, however, to determine if the West utilized liberal logic, or what can be identified as liberal theory, in its foreign and security policy, as Mearsheimer claims, and discuss what the consequences of it was. Therefore, I do not seek to answer whether the West has a wrong understanding of geopolitics, rather, I will challenge Mearsheimer's statements about the West's perception of its own actions and logic behind it, concerning Western-expansionism. To do so, I will explore what Mearsheimer describes as the taproot of the problem; NATO and NATO. In order to examine if the Western logic behind NATO-expansion is based on liberal ideas, I will investigate Western leaders' argumentation and reasoning for NATO-expansion and how they legitimized the process. The US has, arguably, the biggest influence on NATO policy and decision-making as the biggest contributor to the alliance both in terms of funding, but also due to the countries immense military capability. Therefore, I find it useful to get an insight into the perception of the US presidents, who was in office during the expansions of NATO. The expansions from the end of the Cold War to the Ukrainian crisis, not including the German reunification, happened in 1999, 2004, and 2009, during the presidency of former US presidents, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack H. Obama. Therefore, speeches by the three former presidents will be prioritized to determine if a general liberal perspective can be found, in connection with NATO-expansionism. In addition, I will use official declarations by NATO in order to investigate whether what is being said in the speeches transforms into actual NATO-policy. Connected to this topic, I will investigate whether Russia objected to the expansions, as Mearsheimer claims, and whether this effected NATO-policy, if objections were made. To do so, I will present Russian reactions, using speeches by Yeltsin and Putin. Finally, I will use these considerations to assess whether the Russian military intervention in Ukraine can be explained as a consequence of the West's liberal approach to international politics, leading it to force the hand of Russia. There are also other aspects presented in the realist section of this paiper, such as Lukin's conclusion that the West purposely marginalized Russia and chose not to seek

cooperation, while at the same time expecting that Russia would, in time, come to embrace the values of the West. This observation is, however, not directly linked to the question asked in this project. Nonetheless, the subject might be touched upon if it is brought up in the chosen sources. This will also be the case for other aspects of the realist section

Theoratical framework for liberalism

According to McFaul the Russian military intervention has less to do with NATO expansionism and more to do with internal dynamics of Russian politics. McFaul argues that: "Russia has pursued both cooperation and confrontation with the United States" (McFaul et al. 2014: para. 2) in the last decade. This would, in his opinion, not be the case if Russia had felt a constant threat from the United States or the expansionism of NATO. He argues that Russia did not perceive the expansionism of the alliance as a point of conflict, stating that even in the months leading to the crisis: "I cannot recall a single major statement from a senior Russian official warning about the dangerous consequences of NATO expansion" (McFaul et al. 2014: para. 11). In addition, he states that Russia did have the military capabilities to use force in response to the expansionism in the period before the Ukrainian conflict, demonstrated by the two wars Russia launched in Chechnya, but chose not to because it did not perceive it as a threat to Russian security. Instead, he says that to understand "the real story, one has to look past the factor that stayed constant and focus on what has changed: Russian politics" (McFaul et al. 2014: para. 4). McFaul argues that there was a shift in Russia's foreign policy from the presidential period of Dmitrij Medvedev from 2008 to 2012, compared with Putin's presidential period after. During the Medvedev years, McFaul believes that Russia embraced a mutual beneficial relationship with the U.S., working together on both U.S. presence in Kyrgyzstan and in regard to United Nations decisions to use military force against Libya in 2011. However, during the 2011 parliamentary elections in Russia, when Putin ran for third presidential term, "a shift began when Putin and his regime came under attack for the first time ever" (McFaul et al. 2014: para.14). According to McFaul, the election fraud of the government in Russia was exposed on a major scale leading to demonstrations and general "discontent with Putin's return to the Kremlin" (ibid). In response, "Putin recast the United States as an enemy," in order to "mobilize his electoral base and discredit the opposition" (ibid). Consequently, Putin chose to reintroduce the Cold War-rhetoric and hostility towards the U.S. in order to strengthen his position at home, and not in response to NATO expansionism. McFaul states that that the: "Russian foreign policy did not grow more aggressive in response to U.S. policies; it changed as a result of Russian internal political dynamics," and not because of "NATO's long-ago expansion" (ibid). In conclusion, McFaul states that Putin is constrained by his own analytic framework and, therefore, acted: "in a way that he believed tilted the balance of power in his favor" (McFaul et al. 2014: para. 18) This conclusion is also voiced by Sestanovich, who argues that: "Putin made impulsive decisions that subordinated Russia's national interests to his own personal motives," (McFaul et al. 2014:

para. 28). Sestanovich argues that the presence of NATO has created stability, and states that if the alliance had not expanded eastwards to its current boarders, "Russia's conflict with Ukraine would be far more dangerous than what is occurring today" (McFaul et al. 2014: para. 33). In addition, he believes that Putin and Russia also benefit from the development, because it has stabilized eastern Europe. In his view, the problem is that: "Russia has a leader bent on conquest" (McFaul et al. 2014: para. 53). According to Sestanovich, Putin has forced NATO to put Ukrainian membership on its agenda, because of his actions in Crimea. Therefore, his actions towards Ukraine have been counterproductive.

Hypothesis for liberalism

The liberal perspective uses the domestic situation in Russia, to argue why the Ukrainian crisis was Russia's fault. According to this explanation, the Ukrainian crisis was a consequence of a change in the Russian foreign policy. This explanation is based on McFaul's argument, that there was a causal connection between the change in Russia's foreign policy and the internal political dynamics of Russia. According to this interpretation, Russia's foreign changed during the Russian parliamentary election of 2011, because Putin struggled to legitimize his presidency after protests and allegations of vote-rigging. Therefore, Putin chose to re-cast the West as an enemy by addressing NATO-expansion as a problem. In other words, Putin created an imaginary conflict with the west, to secure his position at home. McFaul argues that the relationship between the sides had been mutual beneficial in the previous period, when Medvedev was in office. Further, both McFaul and Sestanovich emphasize the importance of Putin's decision-making in creating the Ukrainian crisis. In this connection, McFaul uses Putin's analytic framework as a supplementary explanation. According to this clarification, the crisis was mainly the consequence of Putin's decision making. Finally, McFaul also argues that the Russian military intervention in Ukraine had little to do with NATO enlargements, because Russia would not have pursued cooperation with the U.S. in the decade leading up to the crisis, if the Kremlin had felt a constant threat form NATO.

In the light of these liberal insights, the Russia military intervention in Ukraine was a result of a Russian change in foreign policy towards the US, beginning during the Russian parliamentary election of 2011. This change led the West and Russia on a collision course over Ukraine.

Analysis approach for liberalism

In order to examine the liberal position on the Ukrainian crisis, put forward in this project, I will look into the most important claims connected to the final hypothesis. To examine whether a change in Russia's foreign led to the Ukrainian crisis, I will start by establishing if the foreign policy ahead of the Russian parliamentary of 2011 election can be described as mutual beneficial, as McFaul claims. To do so, I will investigate the most important foreign policy decision made in Medvedev's presidential period ahead of the election of 2011. Afterwards, I will compare this period to the period after the Russian parliamentary election in order to assess

whether it is possible to identify a change in the Russian foreign policy. Finally, I will assess whether this change in policy was a consequence of Putin's regime coming under fire as McFaul claims.

Theory

Realism

The realist tradition goes back to ancient Greece and has for the last sixty years had a dominant position in international relations in one variety or another (Forde 1995). Realism is chosen because it stresses the competitive and conflictual side of international relations. Among its founding fathers are Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes. In the following I will present some ideas held by classic realists. Afterwards I will differentiate between classic realism and neorealism, or structural realism, followed by a clarification on the difference between offensive and defensive neorealism. Furthermore, a defense of the realist tradition will be presented using the work of Waltz and Mearsheimer. In the end I will present a current realist view on the Ukrainian crisis using essays by Mearsheimer's essay from 2014, Why the Ukrainian Crisis is the West's Fault, and Alexander Lukins essay, What the Kremlin is thinking, also from 2014. Together the two articles will be used as a framework for the analysis.

Classic Realism

Classic realism "emphasizes the constraints on politics imposed by human nature and the absence of international government" (Donnelly, 2000: 74). Together, they make international relations principally a realm of power and interests. The human nature constrains politics because human beings are egoistic to the extent that self-interests overcomes moral principles. The will to dominate and the drive for power are essentially characteristics of human nature. Consequently, "the behavior of the state as a self-seeking egoist is understood to be merely a reflection of the characteristics of the people that compromise the state" (Baylis et al. 2017: 147). Realism offers a moral code for state leaders that takes ethics out of the equations when leaders are making decision in international relations. Leaders must assess their actions according to the outcome and not in terms of moral judgement. The idea of universal morals, such as human rights, are perceived as "unconscious reflex of national policy," by realists (Carr 1987: 111). Therefore, realists see the pursuit of a universal moral or code of conduct as one state imposing its moral principles on another (Morgenthau, 1954). Realists are also skeptical towards the idea of an international community because "each state has its own particular values and beliefs" (Baylis et al. 2017: 152). Therefore, "there can be no community beyond boarders" (Ibid). Realists consider the principal actors in the international arena to be states which are concerned with their own security, gain, and reputation (Donnelly, 2000). Sovereignty is the distinguishing trait for states. The lack of an international government, or sovereign, leads to anarchy because states will pursue their own interests at the expense of other states. The nature of this interstate competition is often described as a zero-sum game; because what one state gains another state loses. Security, or survival,

is the principle concern for all states. In the international arena, no other state can be relied upon to guarantee the survival of other states. "Selfishness and anarchy […] regularly lead states to emphasize security and to seek gain at the expense of others" (Donnelly 2000: 74). Therefore, the international system is based on self-help.

From classic realism to neorealism

In his book *Theory of International Politics* from 1979, Waltz attempted to amend the 'defects' of classical realism. The new para.digm attempts to construct a more scientific approach to the study of international relations. In the view of its supporters, neorealism is more operationalizable because it boils "the foundation of realism down to a single element, structure" (Forde 1995; 142). Consequently, strategy, egoism, and actor motivations are downplayed. The claim from neorealist is that "only by putting this single element or variable at the heart of the theory can realism become "truly scientific" (Ibid).

The new para.digm took its ideological starting point from Morgenthau's writing on classic realism. Morgenthau took his point of departure in the power-seeking behavior of states which he rooted in the biological drives of human beings. He argued that "politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature" (Morgenthau, 1954: 4). Waltz on the other hand, made efforts to circumvent any philosophical discussions of human nature, thereby, "aspiring to explain international relations entirely on the basis of structure, whiteout recourse to appeals to human nature" (Donnelly, 2000: 33). Structural realist, consequently, "conducts an analysis based on the objective nature of the international structure, a system-level analysis" (Feng and Ruizhuang, 2006). Morgenthau described states as having an "insatiable appetite for power," (Mearsheimer, 2001: 19) therefore, they are inherently aggressive. Waltz argues that this is not the case. Stater are, rather, concerned with their own survival and therefore concerned with security. The classic realists believe that the lack of an international government leads to anarchy, but they downplay the importance of structural constraints within the system (Mearsheimer, 2001). According to Waltz, the way a system is organized is defining for the system's structure. Waltz recognizes the existence of non-state actors, but dismisses them as relatively unimportant (Waltz, 1979). "Order is not imposed by higher authority but arises from the interactions of formally equal actors" (Donnelly, 2000: 17). The second defining factor is the diversity of its actors. The structure of the international system is changeable as a multipolar system works differently than a bipolar system. "Competition in multipolar systems is more complicated than competition in bipolar ones because uncertainties about the compara.tive capabilities of states multiply as numbers grow" (Waltz, 2000: 3). The final defining factor is the distribution of capabilities, or power, across actors. The capabilities are also changeable and what differentiates states is not what they seek to achieve, rather, their relative capabilities (Donnelly, 2000). The main objective of a state is therefore "to put itself in a position to be able to take care of itself since no one else can be counted on to do so"

(Waltz, 1979: 107). Consequently, structural realist concentrates on the distribution of power within an anarchic system, and states pursuit of security within said system.

Offensive and defensive realism

However, structural realists have different opinions on how states secure their survival, creating a division between defensive and offensive realists. Mearsheimer is one of the leading contributors to the structural realist tradition. His main innovation is the idea of offensive realism. His theory re-formulates Waltz's structural realist theory by stressing the amount of international aggression in the international system, which may be hard to explain with Waltz's defensive realism (Toft 2005).

Defensive realist, such as Waltz, argue that states will not try to accumulate power if it puts their own security at risk, hence, they will only seek to attain enough power to ensure their own survival (Mearsheimer 2014). Offensive realism argues that states can never be sure of their survival, therefore, they always desire more power. Mearsheimer believe that "the structure of the international system encourages states to pursue hegemony" (Mearsheimer 2001: 12). The end goal for states is, therefore, to attain a hegemonic position in their own region or in the international system. Waltz argues that states should be careful in attaining too much power in the international system because they will be counterbalanced by other states seeking to maintain the status quo (Waltz 1979). Aggression is therefore argued to be self-defeating in achieving the aim of security, which defensive realists argues is the primary objective of states. In defensive realism, preserving power thus seems to be more important than increasing power. Offensive realists on the other hand do not believe that states strive for status quo because "the international system creates powerful incentives for states to look for opportunities to gain power at the expense of rivals" (Mearsheimer 2001: 21). In short, "survival mandates aggressive behavior" (ibid), not because of some inner drive to dominate as Morgenthau would claim but in order to attain security. The defensive realists believe that bipolarity can result in reduced competition for power while offensive realists argue that this is not the case because states aspiring to become hegemons, regionally or globally, are willing to take risks to gain power and advance their position in the international system. (Baylis et al 2017)

Has realism become obsolete?

The argument that realism has become obsolete has been voiced by some scholars of international relations[1], especially since the end of the Cold War. It is based on the perception that the concepts of anarchy, power

[1] See: Lebow, R. N. (1994) "The Long Peace, the End of the Cold War, and the Failure of Realism," in *International Organization*, vol. 48(2), p. 249-277 and Legro, J. W. and Moravcik, A. (1999) "Is Anybody Still a Realist?" in *International Security*, vol. 24(2).

balancing, and self-help are outdated and not applicable to explain the current development in international relations (Waltz 2000). The argument does hold some explicatory force because realist theory certainly has it shortcomings in explaining some developments. This is especially evident in Western Europe and transatlantic relations, after the Second World War, where interdependence and cooperation has made interstate conflicts and warfare "almost unthinkable" (Hasenclever 2014: 136). However, the introduction of regimes and interstate cooperation has not changed the anarchic system in the view of realists, as the most powerful nations continue to bend and break the rules of international law to secure their own national interests.

The perception, that realism has become obsolete, has also been contested by realist who believes that the theories of the school is as relevant as ever. According to Waltz, realism is still relevant because the rules of international relations are unchanged. In his opinion, realism can only be rendered obsolete if the international system changes; not if there is changes within said system (Walt 2000). In his article *Structural Realism after the Cold War*, Waltz argues that changes within the system occurs all the time. He mentions both unit level changes and structural changes. The biggest change within the system, on a unit level, has, according to Waltz, been the introduction of nuclear weaponry. The new weapons changed the way states provided for their own and other states security, however, he still believes that "international politics remains a self-help arena" (Waltz 2000: 5). Throughout history, there has been many such changes to both communication, means of transportation, and war fighting but it has, in Waltz opinion, "not altered the anarchic structure of the international political system" (Ibid). The structure of the system was also changed throughout time. This has been evident when polarity changes in the international system; as it did at the end of the Cold War. Although the changes of weaponry and changes to polarity has had significant ramifications effecting the system, Waltz argues that they did not changes the system itself. If we perceive the international system as a game of chess, Waltz believes, that it is possible to change the numbers of players in the game; structural changes, as well as the chess pieces; unit level changes, without changing the basic rules of the game; the international system.

The idea that realism has become obsolete after the Cold War is derived from Kant's concept of perpetual peace (Mearsheimer 2001). It suggests that "great powers no longer view each other as potential military rivals, but instead as members of a family of nations," (Mearsheimer, 2001: 1) within an international community. Mearsheimer argues that this is not the case: "although the intensity of their competition waxes and wanes, great powers fear each other and always compete with each other for power" (Mearsheimer, 2001: 2). Consequently, the end of the Cold War has not brought us to 'the end of history' (Fukuyama 1989), because the international system has not been replaced by something else. Although the conclusion of the

Cold War has changed some structures within the international system, the international system remains intact, therefore, realism is as relevant as ever (Waltz 2000).

Liberalism

Liberalism

During the Cold War, realism held center stage in international relations because it provided "simple but powerful explanations for war, alliances, imperialism, obstacles to cooperation, […] and because of its emphasis on competition was consistent with the central features of the American-Soviet rivalry" (Walt 1998: 31). At the end of the Cold War, however, realism lost momentum because its predictions of the future were wrong, or unprecise. The end of the Cold War did not result in a return to power politics and interstate warfare in Europe, as realists had predicted. In addition, the Atlantic security community proved durable and not just "conditions of bipolarity and the Cold War" (Zank 2017: 70). Instead, the spread of democracy on the European continent and the economic interdependence and supranational institutions, facilitated by the EU, created a Europe largely liberated from realist predictions (Zank 2017). The interstate conflicts and warfare that had dominated the continent in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were replaced by cooperation and interdependence through international organizations. Consequently, liberal theories gained momentum and have since the end of the Cold War been the most dominant field within international relations, because it offers explanations to this development

The core liberal believes were established by Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham, two of the leading liberal thinkers of the Enlightenment, who paved the way for modern liberalism. They addressed the barbarity and lawlessness of the international system arguing that human reason could deliver freedom and justice in international relations (Baylis et al, 2017). Liberalism is chosen because it seeks to address the problems of achieving lasting peace and cooperation in international relations and addresses the various methods that could contribute to this achievement. Although liberalism is a multidimensional tradition, it is possible to identify five main characteristics in the liberal tradition. The points are interlinked, and they often overlap. In the following, I will introduce these five core assumptions found in liberal theory. Afterwards, I will discuss the concepts of soft power and the democratic peace theory.

Five core assumptions of liberalism

Firstly, liberal theorists have a strong faith in human capability and believe that human beings are rational actors. According to liberal theorists, "human beings are capable of shaping their destiny," (Jorgensen 2010: 57) therefore, humans are also able to shape international relations. Through reason it is possible to overcome "the negative ramifications of the absence of a world government" (Ibid). Consequently, it is possible to overcome the obstacles put forward by an anarchic international system.

Secondly, liberals believe that historical progress is possible because of "human reason and process of social learning" (Jorgensen 2010: 58). Consequently, "liberals firmly cultivate linear and sometimes unidirectional conceptions of history" (Ibid). Francis Fukuyama is one of the liberals that has shown the most confidence in the progressive nature of liberal theory. He perceives history as progressive and linear, therefore, it is possible to reach a final form of government that triumphs all other ideologies (Fukuyama 1989). After the Cold War, Fukuyama argued that: "liberal capitalism was unchallenged as a model of, and endpoint for, humankind's political and economic development" (Burchill et al. 2005: 56). Thereby heralding liberal capitalism as the final evolution of governance.

Thirdly, liberals believe, contrary to realists, that the internal processes of a state are important. Therefore, state-society, ideology, and system of government is defining for how a state acts in international relations. They believe that there is a "close connection [between] on the one hand domestic institutions and politics and on the other hand international politics" (Jorgensen 2010: 58). Consequently, because international politics is insepara.ble from the internal composition and interests of the state they cannot by analyzed separa.tely. Liberals also believe that there is a casual connection between state regimes and the probability of war. Kant articulated this reflection by arguing that: "'republican' (i.e. democratic) states are more peaceful, at least vis-á-vis one another" (Ibid). The idea has since been picked up by Michael W. Doyle, who framed the democratic peace theory. In the next chapter, the concept of democratic peace will be discussed.

Fourthly, some liberal theorists claim that increased economic interdependence creates incentives for peace and cooperation, thereby, reducing the likelihood of conflicts and war. According to Kant, unhindered commerce between the peoples of the world would unite them in a common, peaceful enterprise (Burchill et al 2005). The interdependence created by trade would, according to this assumption, discourage states from utilizing force against other states because warfare would threaten each side's prosperity (Walt 1998). This form of economic integration has been most evident on a regional level and the prime example has been the European Union; a combination of political and economic integration. Liberals adhering to the concept argue that: "free trade is preferable to mercantilism, because trade produces wealth without war" (Jorgensen 2010: 58).

Fifthly, liberals believe that there are positive effects in the processes of institutionalizing international relations. They hold that institutions, organizations, and regimes are important facilitators in shaping interstate relations and state preferences and policy choices. States can, according to liberal theory, "broaden their conceptions of self-interests in order to widen the scope for cooperation," (Burchill et al, 2005: 64) via membership of international institutions. In addition: "Compliance with the rules of these organizations not only discourages the narrow pursuit of national interests, it also weakens the meaning and

appeal of state sovereignty" (Ibid). Therefore, states will commit to co-operation if they believe that doing so will be beneficial. Some liberals have emphasized the importance of creating international agreements, or regimes. The creation of regimes is a way of "formalizing the expectations of each party to an agreement where there is a shared interest" (Burchill et al. 2005: 65). Therefore, regimes can constrain state behavior, enhances trust, continuity, and stability. Institutions also play a key role especially for liberal institutionalists who believe that cooperation between states is best achieved by institutions. In this sense, institutions mean sets of "rules which govern state behavior in specific policy areas" (Burchill et al, 2005: 64). International institutions can help overcome selfish behavior, mainly by "encouraging states to forego immediate gains for the greater benefits of enduring cooperation" (Walt 1998: 32). When a regime is in place, institutions can "assume the role of encouraging cooperative habit, monitoring compliance and sanctions defectors" (Burchill et al, 2005: 65). The instalment of regimes and institutions can therefore help to regulate state behavior in a world of ungoverned anarchy. In addition, they believe that the creation of international organizations, such as the League of Nations, which was formed after World War I, can prevent wars better than other traditional mechanics, such as the balance of power (Jorgensen, 2010).

The democratic peace

War is, in the view of liberals, both irrational and unnatural, "an artificial contrivance and not a product of some peculiarity of human nature" (Burchill et al, 2005: 58). Contrary to some realists, the liberals believe that war is not the natural condition of international relations (Daddow, 2009). Therefore, it is possible to overcome interstate conflicts and power politics. The democratic peace theory is one of the theories of liberalism centered on the believe that it is possible to attain peace in the international realm. It derives from Kant's hypothetical treaty for a perpetual peace (Baylis et al, 2017). For Kant, the creation of republican forms of government in which rulers were accountable to the people would lead to peaceful relations among states. The theory has gone through several stages of development but overall holds that: the spread of democracy, or liberal democracy, is essential to attain world peace. It is based on the idea that democratic states tend to be more pacific than states with other forms of government, especially towards each other (Moravcsik). The view is shared by Fukuyama, who argues that: "[a] world made up of liberal democracies […] should have much less incentive for war, since all nations would reciprocally recognize one another's legitimacy" (Fukuyama, 1992: XX). The idea has, however, been challenged. In the article *Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs*, Michael Doyle argues that liberalism is not "consistently restrained or peaceful" (Doyle, 1983: 206). Liberal democracies are, in Doyle's opinion, as aggressive as any other states in their relations with stateless people and authoritarian regimes (Baylis et al, 2017). In addition, Waltz argues that liberal democracies have at times prepared for war against other democracies. The conflicts were averted "not because of the reluctance of democracies to fight each other but for fear of a third party" (Waltz 2000: 7).

Nonetheless, Doyle points to the fact that: “liberal practice may reduce the probability that states will successfully exercise the consistent restraint and peaceful intentions that a world peace may well require in the nuclear age” (Doyle 1983: 206). In addition, he argues that the liberal order “has strengthened the prospects for a world peace established by the steady expansion of a separa.te peace among liberal societies” (Ibid). Accordingly, Doyle points out that democracies are unique in their willingness and ability to establish peaceful relations with other democracies. This does not mean that democratic states are less inclined to be aggressive towards, what they perceive as, authoritarian or illegitimate states. This perspective does, however, suggest that the best prospect for making war obsolete depends on the spread of democracy across the globe (Burchill et al 2005). However, it is worth noting that the spread of democracy and Western institutions has not always been peaceful, or even productive, as Western military interventionism in the Middle East has clearly shown. Other parts of the world have also rejected the normative superiority of liberal democracy, as China and Russia have chosen different paths. Stephen Burchill argues that: “The greatest barrier to the expansion of the zone of peace from the core is the perception within the periphery that this constitutes little more than the domination of one culture by another (Burchill et al. 2005: 58)”.

Soft Power

The concept of soft power was developed by Joseph Nye and presented in his book, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, from 1990. The notion was further developed in his article, *Soft Power*, from the same year. In the article, Nye argues that because world politics are becoming more complex, states must utilize different types of power to attain their objectives. The “traditional means” (Nye 1990: 166) of power has, according to Nye, “become more costly for modern great power than it was in earlier centuries” (Nye 1990: 157). Therefore, states must use other instruments than military force and coercion to achieve their objectives internationally. According to Nye, the development is a consequence of the growing importance of international non-state actors and institutions in shaping international relations. He believes that these actors, together with increased interdependence, are changing the nature of international relations. The introduction of new actors is not only changing how states achieve their objectives, but also how they define these objectives. Nye believes that it is necessary for states: “not to abandon the traditional concerns for the military balance of power, but to accept its limitations and to supplement it with insights about interdependence” (Nye 1990: 156). Soft power has become increasingly important in international politics, according to Nye, because it offers a different instrument for states to shape international politics and the behavior of other states, without using force. Soft power is, according to Nye, the ability of a state to: “structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistence with its own” (Nye 1990: 168). In other words, the ability of a state to achieve desired outcomes “because other states want to follow it or have agreed to a situation that produced such effect” (Nye 1990:

166. According to Nye, the ability to affect other states often tends to be connected to "intangible power resources" (Nye 1990: 167) such as ideology, institutions and culture. Therefore, soft power "tends to arise from such resources as cultural and ideological attraction as well as rules and institutions of international regimes" (Nye 1990: 168).

Analysis

NATO Declaration of 1990

In the following section, I will use the NATO declaration of 1990 to address how the role of NATO was laid out after the end of the Cold War. Afterwards, I will shortly introduce some overall viewpoints from the chosen speeches by Clinton, Bush, and Obama in order to create an overall impression before I address the speeches separately.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, NATO had to redefine its purpose to still have relevance, but also to legitimize its continued existence now that a reconsolidation with its former adversary, the Soviet Union, had taken place. Therefore, a new framework for NATO was outlined in 1990, in the *Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance*, detailing the new purposes of NATO, as well as a foundation for its future relationship with the Soviet Union (USSR)[2]. According to the declaration, NATO would "continue to provide for the common defense" of the member states (NATO 1990: para 2). In addition, the declaration stated that NATO would act as "an agent of change" (ibid). In this connection, change was associated with creating a more united Europe, by "supporting security and stability with the strength of our shared faith in democracy, the rights of the individual, and the peaceful resolutions of disputes" (ibid). Additionally, NATO also proposed concrete points of policy to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)[3], in the declaration, thereby, making NATO more than just a structure, but also an agent with its own political agenda. This is apparent in the Declaration's support for the CSCE Summit in Paris, and the signing of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). Ahead of the CSCE meeting, in France the same year, NATO recommended a number of points be including in the CFE agreement, such as: "CSCE principles on the right to free and fair elections" and "CSCE commitments to respect and uphold the rule of law" (NATO 1990: para. 21). Consequently, NATO's new role, as presented in the Declaration, was not only as a stand surety of democracy, but also as an agent for change, conflict resolution, and promotion of democracy. Further, the declaration stated that "the growing political and economic integration of the European Community will be

[2] The declaration came before the final collapse of USSR in 1991. Therefore, the new declaration should be understood in this light. The declaration mainly mentions further consolidation, cooperation, and mutual disarmament between the West and USSR.
[3] Renamed to Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1994.

an indispensable factor of stability" in the pursuit of "a just and lasting order of peace throughout the whole of Europe" (NATO 1990: para. 3). Thus, also pointing to the European Union as a tool to create peace and stability.

The declaration of 1990 is important, because it created a new framework for NATO and outlined the purpose of the alliance for the future. It is possible to trace content from the NATO-declaration in the chosen speeches by Clinton, Bush, and Obama, whom all offer liberal perspectives, especially towards enlargements of NATO. However, the speeches also clearly show that the optimism concerning the potential of NATO, as an agent of democracy, changed from the Clinton speech in 1996, to the speech by Obama in 2009. Where Clinton was a strong advocate of the spread of democracy through international institutions, Obama took a subtler stance on the subject. Clinton argued that: "America will be stronger and safer if the democratic family continues to grow" (Clinton 1996). Also addressing how America had "struggled to advance the cause of democracy and to support those who are seeking it" (ibid). As well as calling for the US to "continue to lead abroad" in order to "advance [American] interests at home by advancing the common good around the world" (Ibid). Meanwhile, Obama took a subtler approach to the promotion of democracy, and the overall US role in the enterprise. Although he welcomed Croatia and Albania "into the fold," he did not talk about further expansion or about NATO's or America's role in promotion of democracy (Obama 2009). From Bush's address from 2001, it is evident that he was the strongest, or most outspoken, advocate for the promotion of democracy through NATO enlargement of the three. Bush stated that: "I believe in NATO membership for all of Europe's democracies that seek it and are ready to share the responsibility that NATO brings. The question of whether should not be. As we plan to enlarge NATO" (Bush 2001). Although Clinton, Obama, and Bush express different levels of enthusiasm for NATO-expansion, often in relations to the promotion of democracy and Western values[4], there are noticeable correlations between the speeches in terms of their shared believes in fundamental liberal values, which is also evident in the NATO-declaration from 1990. However, it should be mentioned that other variables are also in play in connection to the speeches, because things such as: historical events, the timing of the speech, and to whom the speech is addressed can play a role for the wording of the speeches. There are, nevertheless, still a clear liberal sentiment, or outlook, throughout all the sources that cannot be ignored or subscribed to other factors and variables.

In the speeches, especially by Clinton and Bush, there is a strong correlation between terms as: peace, freedom, stability, security, and democracy[5]. The concepts are interlinked; peace and stability create democracy, and vice versa, as well as direct proportional; peace and stability increase with the number of

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democracies. In addition, the terms become, in a way, insepara.ble; democracy can only exist if there is peace and stability, and vice versa. This observation will be included and commented upon throughout the section to come. In the following, the speeches by Clinton and Bush will be used to establish their convictions in relations to international politics, specifically regarding NATO and NATO-enlargements.

Clinton and the enlargement of 1999

Clinton's speech was made in Detroit in 1996, three years before the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary entered NATO in 1999. From the speech, it is evident that Clinton was a strong advocate for an open-door policy towards emerging democracies, believing that NATO was a necessity to create stability in Europe. According to Clinton, the end of the Cold War was an opportunity to "build a peaceful, undivided, and democratic continent" (Clinton 1996). His vision was to create a Europe "where democracy and free markets know no boundaries". In Clinton's view, NATO should play a key role in this transformation. He stated that for NATO to "fulfill its real promise of peace and democracy in Europe," it must be proactive and not only reactive (ibid). The statement is very much in line with the wording of the declaration of 1990, where NATO's role "as an agent of change" was introduced (NATO 1990: 2). This role was further substantiated in Clintons speech, as he stated that it was necessary to "take in new members, including those from among [NATO's] former adversaries," in order to preempt any potential conflicts, and to avoid "a gray zone of insecurity" in Europe. Clinton further stated that: "The Unites States and Europe are answering this challenge. With our help, the forces of reform in Europe's newly free nations have laid the foundations of democracy" (ibid). Finally, there are two remarks in Clinton's speech that underlines his understanding of international politics. In the address, he stated that: "After all, when people live free and they're at peace, they're much less likely to make war" (ibid). This notion can, if we keep the above-mentioned correlation between terms in mind, be directly traced back to the logic of the democratic peace theory. In addition, Clinton also expressed an opinion that is closely related to Fukuyama's idea of the progressiveness of liberal ideas, stating that "as we struggle for democracy and freedom […] of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, open markets, respect for diversity these ideas are more and more the ideals of humanity" (ibid). In short, Clinton can be said to represent a strong, almost idealistic, believe in central liberal ideas. This believe found expression in his speech in Detroit as well as in his NATO policy.

Bush and the enlargement of 2004

Bush speech was made in Warsaw in 2001, three years before seven new member states joined NATO in 2004. In Bush address, the idealistic view of Clinton was somewhat replaced by a more vigorous rhetoric. The liberal ideas were still present, although not as outspoken. Instead, the importance of NATO enlargement was greatly amplified. In the speech, Bush stated that the expansion of 1999, had "fulfilled NATO's promise, and that promise now leads eastward and southward, northward and onward" (Bush 2001). Thereby, the

promise of “peace and democracy in Europe,” mentioned in Clinton’s address, was greatly expanded in Bush’s speech (Clinton 1996). In this connection, Bush mentioned the integration of the Balkans, and also specifically stated that “the Europe we are building must include Ukraine” (Bush 2001). Consequently, Bush brought the promise of NATO to the doorstep of the Russian boarder.

Another important point in Bush’s address is the importance of NATO’s activist foreign policy for peacekeeping and promotion of democracy. Bush especially applied this notion in relations to NATO’s role in conflicts in the Balkans, stating that: “Twice NATO had to intervene to stop killings and defend the values that define a new Europe” and concluding that, related to the Balkans, “We’ve made progress. We see democratic changes in Zagreb and Belgrade, moderate governments in Bosnia, multi-ethnic police in Kosovo, the end of violence in southern Serbia” (ibid). In doing so, he underpinned NATO’s role not just as a stand surety for democratic states and emerging democracies, but also as a peace provider and, more importantly, a protector and guarantor of democratic aspirations in non-democratic countries. Thereby, confirming that NATO’s promotion of democracy also includes international conflict resolutions by use of force.

In the speech, Bush made it a point to stress the similarities between NATO and the European Union, stating that both institutions had the same basic commitments to: “democracy, free markets and common security” (ibid). The purposes of both institutions were, according to Bush, connected. They were, in other words, tools created with the same end in mind. According to Bush, Europe and America were bound together in what he called “a great alliance of liberty, history’s greatest united force for peace and progress and human dignity”. This was the alliance that, according to him, would create a “new Europe,” based on democracy and the rule of international law. In addition, Bush also expressed clear liberal sentiments in his speech, just as Clinton did, stating that Europe and America “share more than an alliance. We share a civilization,” and more importantly, concluding that the values of this civilization were “universal” (ibid). This statement is interesting on several levels. The logic behind it can be linked to Fukuyama’s thoughts on the superiority of liberal ideas. In addition, it is an interesting observation in relations to Burchill’s statements on how parts of the world reject the normative superiority of liberal democracy – and ideas. This was, arguably, how Bush perceived the values of the Western civilization; as superior. In addition, he encouraged both NATO and EU to spread these values. The same is true for Clinton, regarding NATO. However, this transfer of values through institutions can, as Burchill puts it, be perceived as “little more than the domination of one culture by another” (Burchill et al. 2005: 58). Consequently, what was perceived as progress in the speeches by Clinton and Bush, might not be perceived the same way in other parts of the world; especially not in Russia.

The Bucharest Summit of 2008

In the following, I will comment on the Bucharest Summit in

The strong conviction in NATO and NATO-enlargement was also expressed in Bush prepared remarks at the Bucharest Summit in 2008. The meeting was important, because it showed that the West disagreed over the request by Georgia and Ukraine to participate in NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP). In his last NATO address, Bush spoke in favor of issuing the MAP to both countries, stating that the US position was clear: "NATO should welcome Georgia and Ukraine into the Membership Action Plan" (Bush 2008a). Bush argued that "it would send a signal throughout the region that these two nations are, and will remain, sovereign and independent states" (ibid). This position was, however, not shared by all NATO members, as especially France and Germany opposed it. According to official US sources, the opposition came from European leaders whom either believed that Georgia and Ukraine did not reach the qualifications for the MAP, or "stressed the need for maintaining good relations with Moscow" (Congress 2008: 25). Therefore, a consensus was never reached. In the end, NATO never formally extended the MAP to Georgia and Ukraine. Nevertheless, the Bucharest Summit Declarations still stated that "MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. Today we make clear that we support these countries' applications for MAP." (NATO 2008: 23). Thereby, keeping the door open for a future membership. In addition, a consensus was reached on Croatian and Albanian membership. It is, however, evident that there was a conflict of interest between the US and its: "Key European NATO allies," concerning Georgian and Ukrainian membership (Congress 2008). Therefore, it is fair to question the idea of a Western consensus, especially related to NATO and NATO-enlargements.

Obama and the enlargement of 2009

In the following, I will compare the speech by Obama to the speeches by Clinton and Bush, in order to show differences and similarities between them. In addition, I will also comment on some correlations between all the speeches. Finally, I will comment on whether Obama's presidency affected NATO policy towards enlargements.

Obama's speech was made in Strasbourg in 2009, just days after Croatia and Albania officially gained membership of NATO. In the speech, the correlation between peace, freedom, stability, security, and democracy was not as evident as in the speeches by Clinton and Bush. In addition, Obama was more focused on reforming NATO to make it "capable of facing down the threats and challenges of this new age," than expanding the security community (Obama 2009). Obama also presented a more nuanced attitude towards democracy and NATO's role in democracy promotion. Related to the topic of democracy, he argued that "a well-functioning society does not just depend on going to the ballot box," and also stated that "there are a whole host of other factors that people need to […] recognize in building a civil society that allows a country to be successful" (ibid). These statements are not contradicting what was presented in the speeches by Clinton and Bush, but the consideration of the importance of democracy, for the sake of democracy, is

certainly not present in the other speeches. Nevertheless, Obama still stated that "obviously we should be promoting democracy everywhere we can" (ibid). Consequently, the enthusiasm for NATO and its role as an agent of change, evident in the speeches of Clinton and Bush, was not present in Obama's speech, although he believed that the West should, "obviously", still promote democracy (ibid). In addition, Obama also had a key statement in his speech related to his perception of the West. He claimed that the West[6] had a "moral authority," based on its core values[7] (ibid). He argued that this authority derived from the "generations of our citizens" who have "fought and bled to upheld these values in our nations and other" (ibid). Obamas claim of "moral authority" is interesting, because it shows a similar sentiment as presented in the speeches by Clinton and Bush; for Clinton, the Western values and democracy were becoming more the "ideal of humanity". For Bush, the values of the Western civilizations were "universal", and for Obama the same values gave a "moral authority". Consequently, they all have some understanding of a normative superiority of Western values.

Although Obama had a more moderate approach to the role of NATO-expansion and democracy promotion, NATO still reaffirmed its commitment that "Georgia will become a member of NATO" in the Lisbon Summit Declaration from 2010, a year after Obama's speech in France (NATO 2010: 21). In addition, the Declaration also stated, in relation to a potential Ukrainian membership, that "NATO's door remains open" (NATO 2010: 22). Therefore, there is little evidence that NATO's role as a promoter of democracy diminished during the first year of Obamas presidency. It is, however, evident that NATO enlargement in general slowed down during his presidency, from 2009 to 2017, with only the introduction of Montenegro in 2017. This can, however, also be explained by other factors. In this connection, it is important to mention the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, which had profound effects on the relationship between Russia and the West. According to Emerson, the war "shattered any remaining illusions over the frontiers of the normative map of Europe" (Emerson 2008: 6). In addition, Mette Skak argues that the war can be perceived as a Russian "proxy war against NATO in general and United States in particular" (Skak 2011: 139). Therefore, the war can also have had an impact on the NATO policy towards enlargements.

[6] He specifically mentions France and America, but I purposely interpret the statement as also including the West in general.

[7] He specifically mentions "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," quoting values found in the American and French constitutions.

Russian objections to NATO enlargements

In the following I will present the Russian position towards NATO expansion doing the Presidency of Boris Yeltsin. In addition, I will comment on how this position was expressed.

Yeltsin and NATO

The NATO enlargement of 1999 happened during the presidency of former Russian President Boris Yeltsin. The Russian position towards the enlargement, at the time, can be described as ambiguous. At first, Russia apparently "accepted" the enlargement of the Central European countries, evident in Yeltsin's joint statement with Polish President Leach Walesa in 1993, where Russia expressed an "understanding" of the NATO-enlargement (Perlez 1993). However, just months later, Yeltsin sent a letter[8] to Clinton, and other Western leaders, in which he changed the Russian position towards the enlargement. According to Western media, Yeltsin stated that the letter was an elaboration of his position, rather than an actual change of position (Cohen 1993). This interpretation is, however, not shared by Western sources. According to an official statement from the Slovak Foreign Ministry: "The content of Mr. Yeltsin's letter sharply contradicts the official positions presented […] during his recent visits to Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia" (Slovak Foreign Ministry as quoted in Cohen 1993: para. 13). The Russian stands on NATO enlargement can, therefore, be described as inconsistent, or vague, in the period, leading to misunderstandings between Russia and the West. According to Western media, Yeltsin's change of heart was a result of internal pressure, especially from the Russian armed forces (Cohen 1993). There is, however, no evidence to back the claim.

The Russian position was somewhat more evident in Yeltsin's speech at the NATO Summit in Paris in 1997. At the Summit, NATO and Russia signed the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation. The purpose of the Act was, as stated in the official document, to "build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security" (NATO 1997). In addition, it creates a framework for cooperation, joint decision-making and joint action based on "the allegiance to shared values, commitments and norms of behavior in the interests of all states" (Ibid). There is, however, a paradoxical element to the Act. On one hand, the Act created fundamental mechanisms for cooperation's on a broad spectrum of areas. In addition, it also stated that: "NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries" (ibid). On the other hand, it is evident from Yeltsin's speech at the summit that the main point of conflict between the sides remained untouched. In his prepared remarks, Yeltsin stated that "Russia still views negatively the expansion plans of NATO" (Yeltsin 1997). Consequently, it is problematic to determine the Russian position during the presidency of Yeltsin, because the position is ambiguous, or vague. It is evident from Yeltsin's speech from the NATO

[8] The letter is not publicly available.

summit in Paris, that Russia had reservations towards NATO expansion, but it never comes off as a strong opposition, rather, it comes off as an accept with reservations.

From Yeltsin to Putin

In the next section, I will present the Russian position towards NATO during the presidency of Putin. In addition, I will also comment on how this position changed over time.

In connection to the enlargement of 2004, the Russian opposition towards NATO and NATO-expansion was still ambiguous. Putin had succeeded Yeltsin in 2000, but the transition had not made an impact on the Russian official position towards NATO. On one hand, the framework for cooperation between NATO and Russia was further developed, and a shared commitment to combat terrorism was articulated. On the other hand, Russia still expressed a moderate opposition to the expansion of NATO and Putin questioned the reasoning behind it, in a joint statement with NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, in 2001. (Robertson and Putin 2001). In 2004, after a meeting with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder in St. Petersburg, Putin announced that "Russia has no concerns about the expansion of NATO from the standpoint of ensuring security, but Russia will organize its military policies accordingly in connection with NATO nearing its borders" (Putin 2004 para. 1). However, Putin also said that: "Russia's relations with NATO are developing positively," and concluded that "any issues that arise can be resolved within the framework of the Russian-NATO council" (Kremlin 2004: para. 3). Therefore, the Russian position towards NATO, at the time, can be described as inconsistent. It does, however, seem that Russia's opposition to NATO was strongly associated with the questions of NATO enlargement, and not related to other aspects, such as the joint efforts against terrorism and nuclear proliferation. The statement regarding how Russia will organize its military policies can, however, be interpreted as an undisclosed warning.

Putin unchained

Ahead of the NATO enlargement of 2009, where Albania and Croatia entered the Atlantic Alliance, Putin held a speech in Germany, at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy of 2007. In his opening remarks, Putin made a virtue of emphasizing that he would say what he really thought about international security problems, and "avoid excessive politeness and the need to speak in roundabout, pleasant but empty diplomatic terms" (Putin 2007). This is an interesting remark in relation to his former speeches, and the Russian position in general, because he implied that Russia's official position and its actual position are not always the same. Therefore, this speech gives an important insight into what Putin and Russia really thinks on the topic of security policy, especially related to NATO. In the speech, Putin expressed a strong opposition to several topics; both regarding general observations concerning the architecture of global security, but also more directly in relation to concrete developments within international politics. In short, the opposition

comes off as a wide-ranging critique of the post-Cold War system. The critique is particularly aimed at America and NATO, and the actor's role in creating said system. Although many of these observations give a broad insight into Putin's perception of international relations, I will mainly address his concrete statements towards NATO and NATO-enlargement, as this is the purpose of this section.

In his speech in Munich, Putin did not comment on the specific enlargement aspirations of Albania and Croatia, instead, he voiced a fierce critique towards NATO and NATO-enlargements in general. Putin argued that Russia had the right to question the purpose and legitimacy of the enlargements, stating that it was "obvious" that NATO expansion had nothing to do with "the modernisation of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe" (ibid). In this connection, he further stated that the enlargements "represents a serious provocation" against Russia, "that reduces the level of mutual trust" (ibid). Consequently, Russia's ambiguous or vague position, in connections with the NATO enlargements of 1999 and 2004, was replaced by a much clearer and outspoken opposition in Putin's address from 2007.

The sharper rhetoric was also evident in Putin's prepared remarks from the NATO-summit in Bucharest in 2008. In his speech, Putin addressed the Georgian and Ukrainian aspirations to join NATO, as well as NATO-Resolution 1244, on Kosovo[9]. In short, Putin's speech at the Summit addressed the demographic complexity of Georgia and Ukraine, and Putin, therefore, urged NATO to use caution in connection to decisions concerning the countries, especially in connection to a potential NATO-membership, and the consequences the association potentially could bring. He addresses the problem, not just for the sake of the affected countries and minorities within them, but also related to Russian interests and security concerns. (ibid). Putin stated that Russia had been "very responsible, very weighted" in connection to these considerations, and called on NATO "to be careful as well" (ibid). In relations to Georgian, he stated that the ethnic problems related to the countries territorial integrity will not be solved by the country entering the Atlantic Alliance. However, the strongest statement came in connection to the Ukrainian aspirations to join NATO, as Putin stated that: "If we introduce into it NATO problems, other problems, it may put the state on the verge of its existence" (ibid). Thereby, indirectly threatening the sovereign integrity of Ukraine, should the country draw closer to NATO (Skak 2011).

[9] Putin used the case of Kosovo to push his point that NATO would stir up problems in "situations similar to that with Kosovo," (Putin 2008) by creating a precedent in sovereign disputes. In this connection, he continued by mentioning disputes related to conflicts between ethnic groups, and questions of territorial integrity, in Transdniestria, Southern Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Karabakh.

The liberal answer to the problem formulation

The liberal perspective of the project, argues that a change in Russia's foreign policy towards the U.S. was the main reason for the Russian military intervention in Ukraine. The change in policy happened, according to this explanation, because Putin's regime came under pressure during the Russian parliamentary election of 2011. Therefore, I seek to question whether a change in the foreign policy of Russia is detectable in the period. In addition, I will discuss whether a change can be said to be the result of Putin recasting the West as an enemy.

The Russo-Georgian war

Although McFaul claims that Russia and the U.S. enjoyed a mutual beneficial relationship during the presidency of Medvedev, this is not evident throughout the period. Instead, the beginning of Medvedev's presidential period marked a low point in the relationship between the two countries, due to disagreements over Georgia. In the following, I will give a short presentation of the Russo-Georgian war to establish both the Russian and American position during the conflict. Afterwards, I will comment on the importance of the event and question why McFaul downplays the significance of the event.

Medvedev had been in office for three months when the Russo-Georgian war broke out in August of 2008. The conflict was essentially a dispute of sovereignty between Georgia and the Russian-backed separatist regions of South Ossetian and Abkhazian. The situation escalated when South Ossetian separatists attacked Georgian positions, and Georgia responded by attacking Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia on 7 August (Emerson 2008). The day after the Georgian offensive, Medvedev issued an official statement, condemning the Georgian aggression and made it clear that the Georgian attack had been in violation of international law (Medvedev 2008a). In response to the Georgian attack, Russia launched a large-scale land, air and sea invasion of Georgia on August 8. The war ended soon after when a ceasefire agreement between Russia and Georgia was mediated by the EU. In the aftermath of the war, Medvedev made a public statement condemning the actions of Georgia. In the address, he argued that Georgia initiated the confrontation and unleashed the armed conflict. In addition, he blamed Georgia's "foreign guardians" for their role in the conflict, because they had, according to Medvedev, not only lent political and material support to the regime, but also "served to reinforce the [Georgian leaderships] perception of their own impunity" (Medvedev 2008b). The critique was especially aimed at the U.S. and President Bush, whom had been a long-time supporter of the Georgian regime of Saakashvili and an advocate of Georgian membership of NATO. In a 2005 speech in Tbilisi, the Georgian capital, Bush had stated that "the territorial and sovereignty of Georgia must be respected by all nations" (Bush 2005). During the conflict, Bush reconfirmed his backing of Saakashvili, stating that "the United States and our allies stand with the people of Georgia and their democratically elected government" (Bush 2008b). While the U.S. was supporting the Georgian regime, Medvedev made

strong accusations against the Georgian President, accusing Saakashvili of trying to commit genocide on the Ossetian people in his aspiration to annex South Ossetia (Medvedev 2008b). Medvedev argued that the Georgian actions had "dashed all the hopes for the peaceful coexistence of Ossetians, Abkhazians and Georgians in a single state" (ibid). Therefore, he would sign Decrees on the recognition of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence. In response, Bush blamed Russia for instigating the conflict and stated that the Russian actions towards Georgia had "damaged its credibility and its relations with the nations of the free world" (Bush 2008b). Meanwhile, Russia blamed the U.S. for sabotaging negotiations between Georgia and Russia and for sending Saakashvili on the war path (Medvedev 2008b).

The dispute over Georgia clearly showed that Russia and the U.S. were unable to find common ground during the crisis. Instead of reaching an agreement, they ended up as adversaries each supporting different sides in the conflict. Although McFaul mentions the conflict, he downplays its role. Instead, he reaches his conclusion based on the period that followed. It is, however, problematic to ignore the crisis, because it clearly showed the lengths Russia would go to, when its core strategic objectives were under pressure. In this instance, Russia quickly turned to a zero-sum mindset and acted as realist theory dictates. In addition, it is evident that Medvedev was directly involved in the decision making which led to the Russo-Georgian war, because he was acting president at the time. Therefore, it is also problematic to make conclusion based on his presidency without including the conflict. Nevertheless, an argument can be made that Medvedev's options towards Georgia were limited when he became President in May 2008, because the previous administration had already embarked upon a specific policy towards the crisis. Consequently, when the crisis turned to conflict, Medvedev's options were arguably limited. He could either make a radical decision to change the Russian position on Georgia, thereby dissociating himself from the previous administration, or follow through on the line set out ahead of his presidency. Medvedev chose the latter.

The reset-button

In the following, I will present the period that followed the Russo-Georgian war. The period was characterized by a mutual effort from Russian and the U.S. to improve relations. I will present a number of agreements reached in the period. Afterwards, I will comment on the significance of these concrete achievements in relations to other developments in Medvedev's term.

The relationship between Russia and the U.S. improved in the years following the Georgian war. This was largely the result of the new American administration's reset-policy towards Russia. The approach proved to be useful, not only due to Obama's moderate line towards Russia, but also because Medvedev was willing to engage in a diplomatic effort to lessen tension. The common effort was publicly displayed when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov pressed a symbolic reset-button at their

joint press conference in Genève in March of 2009. The effort of reconsolidation was further substantiated by meetings between Medvedev and Obama in the following period. In addition, agreements were reached bilaterally, as well as through international institutions. In April 2009, Obama and Medvedev signed a nuclear arms reduction treaty in Prague. The same month, Medvedev allowed for US weapons and personnel to pass through Russian airspace on their way to Afghanistan. The permission came after Obama's official visits to Russia and displayed a shared commitment to combat terrorism. Later that year, in September, Obama backed down on plans for a missile defense system to be placed in Central Europe (Harding and Traynor 2009). Russia had perceived the system as a threat, and therefore, welcomed Obama's decision.

Consequently, it is clear that the Russian zero-sum policy from the Georgian conflict was replaced by a more pragmatic approach. The relationship between Russia and the U.S. was, however, based more on mutual concessions than actual cooperation. Nevertheless, it is clear that a working relationship was possible during Medvedev's presidency. The plans for a missile defense system was, however, brought back into play in November 2010, at the NATO Summit in Lisbon. The declaration from the Summit states that NATO had decided to "develop a missile defense capability to protect all NATO European populations, territory and forces" (NATO 2010). In addition, NATO asked Russia to cooperate in this effort. At a news conference in the aftermath of the Declaration, Medvedev made it clear that Russia would be willing to cooperate on the missile defense system, but any participations would be depended on a guarantee that Russia would be included "on an absolute equal basis" (Medvedev 2010). Further, Medvedev concluded that: "Either we are fully involved […] or we do not take part at all" (ibid). Medvedev did, however, have considerations related to the missile defense system, because he believed that it potentially "could change the existing balance," and argued that such change would benefit neither Europe nor the world in general (ibid). Finally, he stated that if Russia was not included in the process, of developing the missile defense system, "it is understandable that we would have to take defensive measures accordingly" (ibid). Nevertheless, Medvedev emphasized that Russia and NATO were making progress in "building a full and productive partnership" (ibid). In this connection, he noted that the sides had agreed the fallout over Georgia would not become a "stumbling block" in the further efforts to develop the relationship. Further, he stated that Russia and NATO had agreed to "develop a strategic partnership". According to Medvedev, this decision signaled that the sides had "succeeded in putting the difficult period in our relationship behind" (ibid)

Thus, what McFaul describes as a mutual beneficial relationship did, arguably, take place during Medvedev's period. This was evident both in actions and in words. Although Medvedev had reservations towards the potential missile defense system, the overall achievements from the NATO Summit showed that common ground could be found. Consequently, Russia was able to engage in productive dialogue with both the U.S.

and NATO in the period, in order to achieve shared objectives. In addition, Medvedev's decision making on Libya also showed that Russia had embarked on a new course. In March of 2011, Medvedev chose to abstain from voting on resolution 1973 on Libya, at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council. The resolution approved an American led no-fly zone over Libya and authorized the use of "all necessary measures to protect civilians" (UN 2011). In this connection, Medvedev stated that: "Russia did not use its power of veto for the simple reason that I do not consider the resolution in question wrong" (Medvedev 2011). The decision was largely a break with Russia's previous policy on military interventions in third party countries. In 1999, Russia had vetoed a resolution on Yugoslavia, and had also been a strong opponent of the Iraq war of 2003. Therefore, the decision marked a drastic change from Russia's previous foreign policy in this area. McFaul especially emphasizes this decision in his analysis. This specific decision, together with the agreements reached in the reset-period, are the basis of his assessment of Medvedev's period. Looking at these decisions isolated, there is evidence suggesting that Russia's foreign policy was more cooperative towards the U.S. during Medvedev's presidency

The Russian parliamentary election of 2011

In the following, I will present the period leading up to the Russian parliamentary election of 2011, as well as the subsequent period after Putin reassumed the office as President of Russia. In the period, the relationship between Russia and the U.S. entered a new face, as the cooperative relationship that had characterized the reset-period was replaced by a return to confrontations and Cold War rhetoric.

At the United Russia's party conference in September 2011, Medvedev accepted to head United Russia's party list for the parliamentary election in December. At the same time, Medvedev announced that Putin would run for president in the Russian parliamentary election of 2012. Two months after the party conference, Medvedev readdressed the plans for a missile defense system after Russia had been denied the right to be an equal partner in the project (Osborn 2011). In his address from November 2011, a month before the Russian parliamentary election, Medvedev made strong allegations towards NATO, arguing that the U.S. and the Atlantic Alliance had been unwilling to cooperate in reaching a deal on the missile defense system. He further went on to accuse the West of intending to use the missile defense system against Russia. Therefore, he made it clear that Russia would implement defensive measures in response to any development of the system, stating that Russia was prepared to use military force "to take out any part of the US missile defence system in Europe" (Ibid). This reaction was in accordance with Medvedev's statement from 2010, where he directly stated that this was the course Russia would take if the U.S. and NATO were unwilling to include Russia on an equal basis in the system. In addition, Medvedev threatened to withdraw Russia from the nuclear proliferation treaty that he had signed earlier in his period, if NATO continued to

develop the missile defense system (Ibid). Consequently, Russia had returned to its zero-sum policy towards the U.S.

This observation contradicts McFaul's argumentation, because it shows that the Russian foreign policy had already changed ahead of the Russian parliamentary election of 2011. In addition, it shows that the change in foreign policy was not a consequence of the internal dynamics of Russian politics, as McFaul claims. Instead, it is possible to argue that it was a consequence of the West's unwillingness to include Russia on an equal basis in the development of the missile defense system. In this connection, Medvedev had already voiced Russia's concerns over the system in 2010, where he argued that it had the potential to change the balance of power. Therefore, an argument can be made that Russia returned to a zero-sum game, because Medvedev believed that the U.S. was threatening Russia's security by continuing to develop the missile defense system. Consequently, it is possible to argue that the change in Russia's foreign policy was a consequence of the U.S. and NATO ignoring Russia's security concerns.

Medvedev was able to secure his position as Prime Minister of Russia in December of 2011, as United Russia won the election with almost half the votes. There was, however, strong critique from international watchdog organizations questioning the legitimacy of the election, due to reports of electoral fraud. The allegations of vote-rigging spurred antigovernment rally's as large groups of protesters took to the streets demanding regime change. As tension was building, the regime cracked down on the opposition, arresting politicians whom had taken part in the anti-government protests. The Obama administration also questioned the legality of the election. In this connection, Clinton stated that the U.S. had "serious concerns about the conduct of the election," and therefore, called for a "full investigation" of the irregularities in the Russian parliamentary election (ibid). In response to Clinton's allegations, Putin blamed the U.S. for inciting the anti-government protests, claiming that Clinton "gave the signal" to the Russian opposition to start protests (Shuster 2011).

Thus, it is clear that there were large protests and pressure on the Russian regime in the period, as McFaul claims. In addition, it is also clear that Putin blamed the U.S. for its role in inciting protests. At the same time, however, there is no evidence that this development had any influence on the Russian foreign policy, because it had already changed ahead of the parliamentary election. Nevertheless, there is further evidence that a change in the foreign policy did occur. In February of 2012, a month before the Russian presidential election, the relationship between Russia and the U.S. was further strained, when Russia vetoed a UN resolution on Syria. The decision to veto the resolution on Syria is interesting, especially recalling Medvedev's decision not to veto the UN's resolution on Libya. Both decisions were made in Medvedev's presidential period, but the decision making on the two conflicts were different, although the situations can arguably be said to have

similarities. In Syria, Russia chose to back the Al-Assad regime, thereby, positioning itself opposite the U.S. In Libya, however, Medvedev had chosen not to back Gaddafi, instead, accepting the U.S. led intervention in the county. The decision can be explained by a change in Russia's foreign policy. The following year, Putin was elected as President of Russia after receiving close to two thirds of the votes in the March election. Nevertheless, the protests and allegations of vote-rigging returned after the election. Following Putin's return as President, the relationship with the U.S. continued to decline. In this connection, it is evident that the mutual beneficial relationship had ended, at the concession policy was replaced by retaliation policy. In this connection, the U.S. congress passed the Magnitsky Act in December of 2012, imposing targeted sanction on a number of Russian government officials. In response, Moscow issued a ban on U.S. citizens adopting Russian children (Shuster 2011). Further, Putin also chose to give Edward Snowden asylum in June 2013. In response, the U.S. administration chose to cancel Obama's state visit to Moscow.

Discussion

The analysis has showed that it is possible to identify a liberal logic in the West, based on speeches from the American Presidents. However, this liberal perspective does not consistently translate into NATO policy. Clinton was optimistic about the future of Europe and believed that NATO could facilitate both safety and democracy for the Continent. The ambitions of NATO, especially towards enlargements, was even bigger during the presidency of Bush, who wanted NATO's promise to go far and beyond. In addition, both share what can be identified as a strong liberal logic concerning international politics, which translated into their NATO policy, especially concerning enlargements. This was, however, not the case for Obama. Although Obama believed that the West had a moral authority, due to its values, and believed the West should promote democracy, these convictions did not translate into an expansionistic NATO policy. It is also evident that NATO activities, related to enlargements, slowed down in Obama's presidential period from 2009 to 2017, with only the introduction of Montenegro in 2017[10]

Thus, it is possible to identify a liberal logic in the West, which translated into NATO policy, in the presidential periods of Clinton and Bush from 1993 to 2008. This correlation is, however, not present in Obama's period from 2009 to 2017. Therefore, the Ukrainian Crisis cannot be explained as a consequence of Western leader's blind expansionism of Western values through NATO, because these values were not translated into NATO policy towards enlargement, in the period leading up to the Russian military intervention in Ukraine.

It is, however, important to note that the Ukrainian crisis came in the wake of negotiations between EU and Ukraine, and not in connection to a potential NATO membership. The aspirations to incorporate Ukraine into

[10] This development can, however, also be subscribed to other factors, such as strong Russian opposition towards NATO, evident in the case of Georgia and Ukraine.

the Atlantic Alliance was largely halted by 2010, because Ukraine chose a "non-bloc" policy (NATO 2010). This was, however, not the case regarding the potential for an Ukrainian EU membership. In 2012, an Association Agreement (AA) between EU and Ukraine was initialed in Brussels. In this connection, it is important to stress the interconnectedness of the two institutions. This perception was expressed in the NATO Declaration of 1990, which emphasized the importance of a tandem effort, between NATO and EU, in creating stability and peace in Europe. In addition, Bush also stressed the similarities between NATO and EU in his speech from 2004, where he argued that the institutions had the same basic commitments. Therefore, it is apparent that NATO and EU membership cannot be treated as two separable issues in the case of Ukraine. Especially not if Russian leader's do believe that EU expansion is a stalking horse for NATO expansion, as Mearsheimer claims. Following this logic, EU and NATO expansion can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Consequently, if NATO efforts to promote Western values was replaced by an EU effort to do the same, then it makes sense to argue that the West has used these institutions throughout the period to promote its values.

It is also possible to identify a Russian opposition towards NATO enlargements. The opposition was, however, inconsistent throughout the period. During the presidency of Yeltsin, the Russian position towards NATO enlargements was ambiguous. This was most evident by the process that came before the enlargement of 1999. Although Yeltsin looked unfavorably at NATO enlargement, in his Paris speech in 1997, there had been a turbulent development in the preceding years, due to uncertainty regarding the official Russian position towards the enlargement. In addition, the Russian opposition towards NATO enlargement was largely undermined by Russia's simultaneous efforts to increase cooperation with NATO in other areas. This was also the case in the early period of Putin's presidency. In both periods, stretching from approximately 1993 to 2004, the Russian Presidents largely accepted, or recognized, the enlargements, while at the same time expressing moderate reservations towards the process. Russia was, so to speak, balancing its policy towards NATO. On one hand, expressing moderate opposition towards NATO expansion. On the other hand, pursuing further cooperation with NATO in other areas. Therefore, the Russian opposition towards NATO enlargement can be described as moderate, or vague in the period. This approach was, however, abandoned by 2007, evident in Putin's prepared remarks from the Munich Conference. In the speech, Putin applied a much more critical tone towards the West in general and NATO in particular. This was also evident in Putin's speech a year later in Bucharest, where he questioned a potential Georgian membership of NATO, and issued thinly veiled threats towards Ukraine if the country should draw closer to NATO. Therefore, it is evident that the Russian balancing policy towards NATO, was replaced by what can be described as a confrontation policy. The new policy was especially linked to NATO aspirations to incorporate Georgia and Ukraine. Russia expressed strong reservations towards this process, and the Russo-Georgian war can arguably be viewed as

a manifestation of Russia's new confrontation policy towards NATO enlargement. This is especially the case, if the war is perceived as a Russian proxy war against NATO, as Skak argues. The Russian opposition towards this process can also be interpreted in a wider context, as a general opposition towards the spread of Western influence into the Russian near abroad. Following this logic, it would make little difference to Russia, if this process was connected to NATO or EU.

Consequently, the realist answer to the problem formulation does have some explanatory force, as it is possible to identify: 1) a certain liberal perception in the West based on the believe in the normative superiority of Western institutions, and a link between this liberal logic and NATO enlargements, in the presidential periods of Bush and Clinton. Further, if EU and NATO are treated as two interlinked institutions with the same goal in mind, then this process also continued into the presidential period of Obama, although NATO expansion was replaced by EU expansion. With these reservations in mind, it is possible to argue that the West did continue to expand its influence throughout the period. 2) it is also possible to argue that this process happened despite Russian objections, because Russia had made it clear by 2008, that encroachment on its near abroad, especially in relation to Georgia and Ukraine, was unacceptable. In addition, Russia showed its determination to use military force to prevent this development, if the Russo-Georgian war is interpreted as a proxy war against NATO and the US. Consequently, the Russian military intervention in Ukraine can partially be explained by the realist position presented in this paper. There are, however, some reservations to this assessment.

The liberal perspective of the analysis has shown that Russia was able to engage in cooperation with the U.S. during Medvedev's presidential period. The relationship can be said to have been mutual beneficial at times, although it was mainly based on the willingness of both sides to make concessions. Nevertheless, there were two instances where Medvedev chose a confrontational course towards the U.S. In the beginning of his term, he chose to use military force against Georgia. In the end of his term, he threatened to take military action against NATO, because Russia was not included on an equal basis in the development of NATO's European missile defense system. McFaul argues that the second fallout between the sides was a consequence of Putin and his regime coming under attack, due to allegations of vote rigging leading to protests and a general dissatisfaction with the regime. Consequently, Putin chose to recast the U.S. as an enemy. The analysis has, however, shown that the hostilities between Russian and the U.S. happened before the regime came under attack. The change in foreign policy can, therefore, not be explained as a as a consequence of Putin's regime coming under attack, because the change had already occurred before this event. Instead, it was a consequence of Russia's security concerns over NATO and the U.S. continued development of a missile defense system that Russia had clearly opposed.

Conclusion

The project has shown that the Russian military intervention can be explained by a number of developments. The West's use of international institutions, the EU and NATO, as prompters of democracy and Western values played a major role in establishing a confrontational relationship between Russia and the West. This development was especially problematic when the West tried to spread its values, or influence, into Russia's near abroad. In addition, the West's use of NATO as a guarantor of European security was also a point of conflict, evident in the development of a European missile defense system. Therefore, it is evident that the West in several areas threatened Russia's interests. Further, it is also evident that Russia was willing to sacrifice its relationship with the West when the Russian leadership believed that Russia's strategic objectives or security was threatened. In these instances, Russia quickly turned to a zero-sum policy and acted as realist theory dictates. Further, it is also clear that Russia made objections to both the expansion of Western influence, but also to the development of a NATO sponsored European missile defense system. Nevertheless, the West largely ignored these objections and continued to develop both. Consequently, the Russian military intervention in Ukraine can be explained by the West's misunderstanding of the lengths Russia would go to in order to protect its strategic objectives and its security. In the case of Ukraine, it is clear that it was unacceptable for Russia to have a neighbor state, as strategic important as Ukraine, falling into the hands of the West. Therefore, Russia chose to make a military intervention in order to regain control over Ukraine.

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